

Vice President of Travel & Hospitality Europe, DataArt

CHARLOTTE LAMP DAVIES

DataArt's Charlotte Lamp Davies discusses the latest trends in travel technology with Benjamin Coren

In the rapidly evolving world of travel technology the ability to adapt, develop and spot new trends is perhaps the most valuable skill of all. It is a quality that DataArt's Charlotte Lamp Davies has in abundance, as the list of major tech players she has worked with would attest: Google, Microsoft, lastminute.com, Skyscanner and Amadeus, among others.

"With technology you have to react fast. Every day there is something new," she says. "And the business travel sector is the most focused on bringing in new technology. There are many smaller, new players grabbing a piece of the market as their technology is more advanced."

To many they are known collectively as 'disruptors' but in fact the work they are doing promotes innovation in technology, pushing it forward, and the benefits are being seen in the business travel sector.

“The business travel sector is the most focused on bringing in new technology and there are many new players entering the market”

"Smaller companies tend to come from other industries where they have seen a gap in the travel market. These organisations are niche and not bureaucratic – they test to see if something is a good idea, but they also abandon quickly and move forward very fast,".

DataArt, a global technology consultancy that designs and develops software solutions, entered the business travel market only a few years ago, with the big TMCs all investing heavily in new technology, says Lamp Davies. "We are certainly seeing more uptake and investment in technology and we operate as a consultancy as they migrate from legacy systems to new technology," she explains.

She cites software like WayBlazer, provided by IBM, which analyses traveller habits and offers personalised recommendations. Visit Orlando and Thomson have already trialed it and reported fantastic customer feedback. "It's adding more to the travel agent's role, streamlining many processes for the current and next generations."

Another example is chatbot app, Lola, which connects customers with teams of travel agents for on-the-go advice. "We are working with customers to implement these particular technologies, though details are currently under wraps," says Lamp Davies.

She moved to London from her native Denmark 26 years ago, taking on a number

of high-profile sales and marketing roles before moving into the travel technology arena. She joined DataArt four years ago in a position created to develop the company's travel and hospitality practices work in Europe. "My role is about understanding the synergies between our existing markets and the new ones we are moving in to. When I joined there were 800 people in the company. Today, DataArt employs 2,200 people across 20 locations worldwide – it's been phenomenal growth."

One area of particular attention for the company in the year ahead is likely to be cyber security, says Lamp Davies.

"The focus right now on this is growing. Today, we have access to more data and information than we have ever had access to before. We're looking at ways in which all this information should be accessed and shared. We ask for more information to service our clients better but the more we have, the more we have to lose."

She points to the finance sector as a good place to look in terms of data protection and the technology that is in place to facilitate these needs. "The sector is very security-driven and we try to learn from that in travel. When clients ask us what technology to include it's great that we can relate to DataArt's finance practice which has a few more years of experience in these areas," Lamp Davies explains.

in brief...

Do you have a typical working day?

"There isn't a typical working day for me. It really depends on whether I'm in London or preparing for meetings and overseas trips, taking clients to our development centres. This is one of my favourite aspects of the job. We have centres predominantly in Eastern Europe, Buenos Aires, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, with headquarters in New York, where there are further development centres."

Tell us about some of your favourite travel destinations?

"I love the Middle East. I'm fascinated by the history and I'm fascinated by the heat of that part of the world in the desert. I've travelled and worked in the Middle East a lot in my life and I'm mesmerised by how rich the culture is. I've travelled most of my life and I think it was only a matter of time before I ended up working in the industry. My love of travel is something I am passing onto my children. It makes you explore aspects of yourself that otherwise you would not discover."

Do you have any hidden talents you can share with us?

"I am a trained opera singer! I trained at a young age in Denmark before leaving for London when I was 24. Although I work in the travel technology sector my passion for the theatre remains strong."

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Charlotte Lamp Davies is Vice President of Travel & Hospitality Europe for DataArt, the global technology consultancy. A multi-linguist and passionate proponent of innovative travel technologies, Charlotte joined DataArt in 2012, having previously worked with a number of big names including Expedia, Thomas Cook, Google, Microsoft and Yahoo. She has worked across several industries including international media, oil and petrochemicals, before moving to the travel sector.